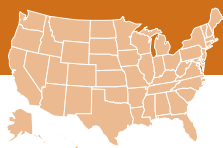


The Status of Women in Your County: A Community Research Tool



Misha Werschkul, Barbara Gault, and Heidi Hartmann
The Institute for Women's Policy Research

Sponsored by the James A. & Faith Knight Foundation

About this Tool

This tool is a joint project of the Institute for Women's Policy Research and the James A. & Faith Knight Foundation, to build capacity among community groups to assess and track the status of women in their regions. It was prepared by Misha Werschkul, Barbara Gault, and Heidi Hartmann of the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) and funded by the James A. & Faith Knight Foundation.

About the James A. & Faith Knight Foundation

Primarily serving Michigan's Jackson and Washtenaw counties, the James A. & Faith Knight Foundation is dedicated to improving communities by providing grant support to qualified nonprofit organizations including, but not limited to, those that address the needs of women and girls; animals and the natural world; and internal capacity.

About the Institute for Women's Policy Research

IWPR is a public policy research organization dedicated to informing and stimulating the debate on issues of critical importance to women and their families. IWPR focuses on issues of poverty and welfare, employment and earnings, work and family issues, health and safety, and women's civic and political participation. IWPR, an independent, non profit, research organization, also works in affiliation with the graduate programs in public policy and women's studies at The George Washington University.



introduction

The tool provides instructions for finding information on the status of women in your county. County-level indicators can inform local policy by identifying areas of need and providing a context for local policy agendas. The suggested indicators in this tool match the state-level indicators used in the *Status of Women in the States* reports, published by the Institute for Women's Policy Research. IWPR's *Status of Women in the States* reports organize information on women's status into six topic areas: basic demographics, political participation, employment and earnings, social and economic autonomy, reproductive rights, and health and well-being.

This tool uses a question-and-answer format to help you find county-level data for indicators in each of these six areas. To help you locate data for these indicators, this tool includes tips on where to look and examples of where to find data for a county in Michigan. If you do not live in Michigan, seek similar organizations in your state or county. If one of the indicators is not available for your country, feel free to improvise or substitute a related indicator. For example, if morality rates are not available, try substituting incidence rates. Data for many of the suggested indicators can be accessed through American FactFinder, a program to access U.S. Census Bureau data online. **For step-by-step instructions on how to use American FactFinder, see the next page.**

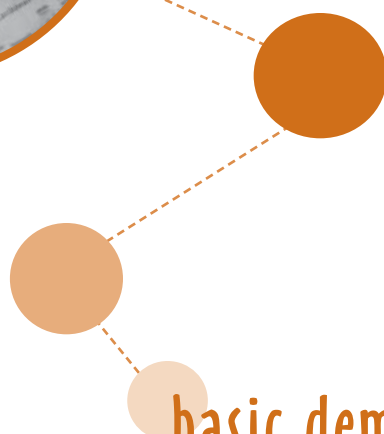
Once you have collected the data, you can then benchmark your county with neighboring counties or with the state average, as long as the data sources and sample are comparable. State averages for each of these indicators can be found in IWPR's *Status of Women in the States* reports (check IWPR's website for the latest report). If you would like more information on writing a county-level status of women report, please see IWPR's full report, *Assessing the Status of Women at the County Level: A Manual for Researchers and Advocates*.



How do I use American FactFinder?

1. From the American FactFinder main page (<http://factfinder.census.gov>), click on the Data Sets button on the left-hand side of the page.
2. Select Census 2000 Summary File 3 and choose the Detailed Tables option.
3. Select County as the geographic type. Then select your state and county, clicking Add after your selection. Then click Next.
4. Select tables by Subject or Keyword, or Show All Tables.
5. Add as many tables as needed. Then click Show Result.
6. The tables will display on your screen. From the drop-down Print/Download menu on the top right of the screen, you can download your results, print results, or load or save a query.
7. When calculating percentages from the tables, always use the total population figure as presented in the table because the sample may vary from table to table.

Note: American FactFinder will display output for all geographic areas and groups regardless of the sample sizes. Because some counties may be small and certain variables will have small sample sizes, users should set a cutoff of 50 observations or less for which data will not be reported.



basic demographics

Before you begin, this set of questions will lead you to some basic demographic data on women in your county from the 2000 U.S. Census. Demographic information is important because it presents a profile of the state's female population and can be used to provide insight on the other topics covered in this tool. These data can also help target programs and advocacy efforts. Basic demographic data for the county include the percentage of the population that is female, the racial/ethnic makeup of the female population, the percent of women with a disability, and the marital status of women in the country.

Q: What portion of my county's population are women?

A:
$$\left(\frac{\text{Number of Women in County}}{\text{Total Number of Men in County} + \text{Total Number of Women in County}} \right) \times 100 = __ \%$$

TIP: This information is available from the 2000 U.S. Census, which can be accessed through American FactFinder (<http://factfinder.census.gov>). See Table P8: Sex by Age.

Q: What percent of women in my county are white, African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Asian American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, some other race, or two or more races?

A: $(\text{Number of Women in County Who Identify as Specified Racial or Ethnic Category} / \text{Total Number of Women in County}) \times 100 = __ \%$.

TIP: These data are available from the 2000 U.S. Census, which can be accessed through American FactFinder (<http://factfinder.census.gov>). See Tables P145A-P145G: Sex by Age (by Race/Ethnicity).

Q: What percent of women in my county are Hispanic or Latina?

A: $(\text{Number of Women in County Who Identify as Hispanic or Latina} / \text{Total Number of Women in County}) \times 100 = __ \%$.

TIP: These data are available from the 2000 U.S. Census, which can be accessed through American FactFinder (<http://factfinder.census.gov>). See Table P145H: Sex by Age (Hispanic or Latino).

Q: What percent of women in my county have a disability?

A: $(\text{Number of Women Aged 21 to 64 in County with a Disability} / \text{Total Number of Women Aged 21 to 64 in County}) \times 100 = __ \%$.

TIP: This information is available from the 2000 U.S. Census, which can be accessed through American FactFinder (<http://factfinder.census.gov>). See Table PCT26: Sex by Age by Types of Disability.

Q: What percent of women in my county are never married, widowed, divorced or now married?

A: $(\text{Number of Women Aged 15 and Older in County Who Are Never Married, Widowed, Divorced, or Now Married} / \text{Total Number of Women Aged 15 and Older in County}) \times 100 = __ \%$.

TIP: This information is available from the 2000 U.S. Census, which can be accessed through American FactFinder (<http://factfinder.census.gov>). See Table P18: Sex by Marital Status for the Population 15+ Years.

The next sections will lead you through five important aspects of women's status: political participation, employment and earnings, social and economic autonomy, reproductive rights, and health and well-being.





political participation

Political participation allows women to influence policies that affect their lives. By voting, running for office, and taking advantage of other avenues of participation, women can make their concerns, experiences, and priorities visible in policy decisions. This section discusses data on four aspects of women's involvement in the political process: female elected representation, women's county institutional resources (for example, a task force or a commission focused on the status of women), and women's voter registration and turnout.

Q: What percent of my county officeholders are women?

A: $(\text{Number of Female County Officeholders} / \text{Total Number of County Officeholders}) \times 100 = __ \%$.

TIP: To calculate the percent of county officeholders who are women, we recommend calculating the number of female county clerks, county commissioners, county prosecuting attorneys, and county sheriffs and dividing this number by the total number of county clerks, county commissioners, county prosecuting attorneys, and county sheriffs in a given county. To locate this information, try looking on the website of your county government or in the Directory of Public Officials. If you have any difficulty determining the gender of the officeholder, call the county office to double check. For example, in Clinton County, Michigan, these data can be found on the county government websites:

-  <http://www.co.clinton.mi.us/clerk/clerk.htm>
-  <http://www.co.clinton.mi.us/board/board.htm>
-  http://www.co.clinton.mi.us/prosattny/pros_attorney.htm
-  http://www.co.clinton.mi.us/sheriff/sheriff_office.htm

Q: Does my county have a task force or a commission focused on the status of women?

A: Circle Yes or No.

TIP: Check the website of your county government for a county women's commission or task force, and call the county government office. For example, see the Ingham County Women's Commission (<http://www.ingham.org/bc/wom>).

Q: What percent of women in my county registered to vote in the last national general election?

A: $(\text{Number of Women Aged 18 and Older Who Registered to Vote} / \text{Total Number of Women Aged 18 and Older in County}) \times 100 = __ \%$.

TIP: You may be able to find data on women's voter registration from the state or county Democratic and Republican headquarters, the County Clerk, the Office of the

Secretary of State, or the League of Women Voters. In Michigan, for example, the Michigan Bureau of Elections sells the entire voter registration files for \$170 (requests should be directed to Lucinda Sheltroun at SheltrounL@michigan.gov or 517-373-2540). The University of Michigan Institute for Social Research may also have this information (734-764-8354).

Q: What percent of women in my county voted in the last national general election?

A: $(\text{Number of Women Aged 18 and Older Who Voted} / \text{Total Number of Women Aged 18 and Older in County}) \times 100 = __ \%$.

TIP: Check with your state's Democratic and Republican headquarters, the County Clerk's office, the Office of the Secretary of State, or the League of Women Voters. In Michigan, this information may be available from the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research (734-764-8354) or the County Clerk's office.



Can I compare these data to other sources?

When trying to compare your data to data for other counties, or to state or national averages, it is important to always compare apples to apples and oranges to oranges. Data are only comparable if they are from the same source, for the same year, and if the sample characteristics are the same. If there are no comparable state or national data, one option is to track county-level data over time to see if the county is improving or worsening.

employment and earnings

Because earnings are the largest component of income for most families, earnings and economic well-being are closely linked. Ensuring women's economic rights includes improving access to employment, eliminating occupational segregation and employment discrimination, and helping men and women balance work and family responsibilities. This section directs you to data on several aspects of women's economic status: women's earnings, the female/male earnings ratio, women's labor force participation, and the percent of women who are employed in professional or managerial occupations.

Q: What are the median annual earnings of full-time, full-year female workers in my county?

A: \$_____.

TIP: These data are available from the 2000 U.S. Census, which can be accessed through American FactFinder (<http://factfinder.census.gov>). See Table PCT47: Median Earnings in 1999 (dollars) by Work Experience in 1999 by Sex for the Population 16 Years and Over with Earnings in 1999.

Q: What is the ratio of women's to men's median annual earnings in my county for full-time, full-year workers?

A: Wage Ratio: (Women's Median Annual Earnings/Men's Median Annual Earnings) x 100 = __ %. Wage Gap: 100 - Wage Ratio = __ %.

TIP: See instructions above for obtaining women's median annual earnings. The wage gap can be calculated by subtracting the wage ratio from 100.

Q: What percent of women in my county participate in the labor force?

A: (Number of Women Aged 16 and Older Who Are Employed or Looking for Work/Total Number of Women Aged 16 and Older) x 100 = __ %.

TIP: These data are available from the 2000 U.S. Census, which can be accessed through American FactFinder (<http://factfinder.census.gov>). See Table P43: Sex by Employment Status for the Population 16 Years and Older.

Q: What percent of women in my county are employed in management, professional, and related occupations?

A: (Number of Women Aged 16 and Older Employed in Management, Professional, and Related Occupations/Total Number of Employed Women Aged 16 and Older) x 100 = __ %.

TIP: These data are available from the 2000 U.S. Census, which can be accessed through American FactFinder (<http://factfinder.census.gov>). See Table P50: Sex by Occupation for the Employed Civilian Population 16 Years and Older.

social & economic autonomy

While labor force participation and earnings are critical to women's financial security, many additional resources and opportunities affect women's ability to act independently, exercise choice, and control their lives. This section highlights several topics important to women's social and economic autonomy: health insurance coverage, educational attainment, business ownership, and poverty.

Q: What percent of women in my county have health insurance?

A: $(\text{Percent of Women Aged 18 to 64 with Health Insurance} / \text{Total Number of Women Aged 18 to 64}) \times 100 = __ \%$.

TIP: Try checking with your State Health Department or County Public and Community Health Department. A data analyst could also calculate this from the Current Population Survey.

Q: What percent of women in my county have completed four or more years of college?

A: $(\text{Number of Women Aged 25 and Over with Four Years of College or More} / \text{Total Number of Women Aged 25 and Older}) \times 100 = __ \%$.

TIP: This information is available from the 2000 U.S. Census, which can be accessed through American FactFinder (<http://factfinder.census.gov>). See Table P37: Sex by Educational Attainment for Population 25 Years and Older.

Q: What percent of businesses in my county are owned by women?

A: $(\text{Number of Businesses Owned by Women} / \text{Total Number of Businesses}) \times 100 = __ \%$.

TIP: Try checking the 1997 Census Bureau report on Women-Owned Businesses (<http://www.census.gov/prod/ec97/e97cs-2.pdf>) or the Center for Women's Business Research (<http://www.nfwbo.org/metronumbers.html>).

Q: What percent of women in my county live below the official poverty line?

A: $(\text{Number of Women Living at or Below the Poverty Line} / \text{Total Number of Women}) \times 100 = __ \%$.

TIP: This information is available from the 2000 U.S. Census, which can be accessed through American FactFinder (<http://factfinder.census.gov>). See Table PCT49: Poverty Status in 1999 by Sex by Age.



A Quick Lesson in Statistics:

The mean (also known as the average) is the sum of the values divided by the total number in the sample. For example, the average age is the sum of everyone's age divided by the number of people in the study.

The median is the value that falls in the middle of an ordered sample. When the sample size is odd, a single value falls in the middle. When the sample size is even, two middle values occur, and the median is the midpoint between the two. For example, if there are five women aged 20, 25, 30, 45, and 75, the median age is 30, while the mean, or average age, is 39.

The rate is the number of occurrences divided by the total population. For example, the mortality rate from a disease or cause is the number of deaths from a specific cause in an area divided by the population of that area, expressed as X deaths per 100,000 people per year. If there are 30 suicide deaths in a female population of 300,000, the mortality rate from suicide is 10 per 100,000.

reproductive rights

Reproductive health includes the ability to have a safe, satisfying sex life; to reproduce; and to decide if, when, and how often to do so. Adolescent girls in particular need information and access to relevant services. Because reproductive issues are so important to women's lives, this section addresses the county health plan for civil service employees, the percent of pro-choice county officials, the infant mortality rate, the percent of low-birth-weight babies, and the percent of mothers receiving prenatal care.

Q: Does my county's health plan for civil service employees cover infertility treatments and contraceptives?

A: Circle Yes or No.

TIP: Try checking the county government website and the county health plan. In Michigan, the state health plan is available at http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Employees_Book_58654_7.pdf. Contact your County Department of Human Services for information on your county plan.

Q: What percent of my county officials are pro-choice?

A: $(\text{Number of Pro-Choice County Officials} / \text{Total Number of County Officials}) \times 100 = __\%$

TIP: Check the county government's website, the Municipal Clerk's office, the Directory of Public Officials or the County Legislative Directory. If you can't find it from these sources, try contacting your state NARAL or call your County Administration.

Q: What is the infant mortality rate in my county?

A: $___\text{ deaths of infants under age one per 1,000 live births.}$

TIP: Try checking with the State Health Department or State Department of Vital Statistics. Also, check with the County Public or Community Health Department. In Michigan, see <http://www.mdch.state.mi.us/pha/osr/InDxMain/Tab3.asp>.

Q: What percent of babies born in my county are low birth weight (less than 5 lbs., 8 oz.)?

A: $(\text{Number of Low-Birth-Weight Babies} / \text{Total Number of Babies Born in County}) \times 100 = __\%$

TIP: Try checking the State Department of Vital Statistics or the State Health Department. Also, check with the County Public or Community Health Department. In Michigan, see <http://www.mdch.state.mi.us/pha/osr/Natality/LowWeightBirths.asp>.

Q: What percent of pregnant mothers in my county receive prenatal care in their first trimester?

A: $(\text{Number of Pregnant Mothers Receiving Prenatal Care in First Trimester} / \text{Total Number of Pregnant Mothers in County}) \times 100 = __ \%$.


TIP: Try checking with the State Department of Vital Statistics or the State Health Department. Also, check with the County Public or Community Health Department. In Michigan, try calling the Michigan Department of Community Health at 517-335-8712 or email Humphrysk@Michigan.gov.





Are there examples of groups that have collected information or produced reports on women's status at the county level?

Check out these reports:

 *A Portrait of Women & Girls in the Washington Metropolitan Area* by the Washington Area Women's Foundation (2003). Available online at: <http://www.wawf.org/facts/index.html>.

 *Facts About Women in Erie County 2003* by Shane Eisen Grant, Sara Asrat, and Bridgette Jackson of the Erie County Commission on the Status of Women (2003). Available online at: <http://csw.erie.gov/Facts12-24-03.pdf>.

 *The Status of Women and Girls – Greater Houston* by Beverly McPhail, C. Brene Brown, and Karen A. Holmes of the Women's Resource of Greater Houston (2004). Houston, TX: The Women's Resource of Greater Houston.

 *The Status of Women in Maryland* by the Maryland Commission for Women (2003). Available online at: <http://www.marylandwomen.org/pdf/swmd2000.pdf>.

 *The Status of Women in Minnesota Counties* by the Women's Foundation of Minnesota (2004). Available online at: <http://www.wfmn.org>.

 *Year 2000 Status of Women & Girls in Chicago* by the Center for Research on Women and Gender at the University of Illinois at Chicago (2000). Available online at: <http://www.uic.edu/orgs/rin/2000rpt/maintoc.html>.

health and well-being

Health is a crucial factor in women's overall status. Health problems can seriously impair women's quality of life, as well as their ability to care for themselves and their families. Women's overall health status is closely connected to many of the other indicators in this tool, including women's poverty status, access to health insurance, and reproductive rights. Women's health and well-being can be measured by many indicators, including mortality from heart disease; morality or incidence rates from lung cancer and breast cancer; incidence of diabetes and AIDS; and mortality from suicide.

Q: What is women's mortality rate from heart disease in my county?

A: ____ deaths from heart disease per 100,000 women.

TIP: Try checking with your State Health Department or State Department of Vital Statistics. Also, check with the County Public or Community Health Department.

In Michigan, see <http://www.mdch.state.mi.us/pha/osr/chi/Deaths/frame.html>.

For instructions on calculating "rates" please see page 6.

Q: What is women's mortality rate from lung cancer in my county?

A: ____ deaths from lung cancer per 100,000 women.

TIP: Try checking with your State Health Department or State Department of Vital Statistics. Also, check with the County Public or Community Health Department. In Minnesota, see Mortality Table 4a of the 2003 Minnesota County Health Tables: http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/countytables/profiles2003/C_Mortality.pdf.

In Michigan, mortality data are not available. To substitute with incidence rates, see <http://www.mdch.state.mi.us/pha/osr/chi/Cancer/frame.html>.

Q: What is women's mortality rate from breast cancer in my county?

A: ____ deaths from breast cancer per 100,000 women.

TIP: Try checking with your State Health Department or State Department of Vital Statistics. Also, check with the County Public or Community Health Department. In Minnesota, see Mortality Table 4a of the 2003 Minnesota County Health Tables: http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/countytables/profiles2003/C_Mortality.pdf.

In Michigan, mortality data are not available. To substitute with incidence rates, see <http://www.mdch.state.mi.us/pha/osr/chi/Cancer/frame.html>.

Q: What percent of women aged 18 and over in my county have diabetes?

A: $(\text{Number of Women Aged 18 and Over Who Have Ever Been Diagnosed with Diabetes} / \text{Total Number of Women Aged 18 and Over}) \times 100 = __\%$.

TIP: Try checking with your State Health Department or State Department of Vital Statistics. Also, check with the County Public or Community Health Department.

Q: What is the average annual incidence rate of AIDS among women aged 13 and older in my county?

A: _____ per 100,000 women.

TIP: Try checking with your State Health Department or State Department of Vital Statistics. Also, check with the County Public or Community Health Department.

Q: What is women's average annual mortality rate from suicide in my county?

A: _____ deaths from suicide per 100,000 women.

TIP: Try checking with your State Health Department or State Department of Vital Statistics. Also, check with the County Public or Community Health Department.



How can I get more information?

Contact the Institute for Women's Policy Research at 202-785-5100 or iwpr@iwpr.org.

Or check out IWPR's full report, entitled *Assessing the Status of Women at the County Level: A Manual for Researchers and Advocates*, available at

 <http://www.iwpr.org>.

policy recommendations, outreach, & dissemination

The data that you've collected can be formatted into a report, fact sheet, or website, which can serve as a resource for advocates, researchers, educators, and policymakers in the state and county, to inform the public and motivate action. To have the greatest impact, we suggest developing specific policy recommendations and carefully organizing outreach and dissemination efforts.

Q: How do I develop policy recommendations?

A: We suggest contacting your State Legislative Commission on the Status of Women or local policy experts to help form relevant and appropriate national, state, or local recommendations. IWPR's *Status of Women in the States* reports can also be used as models for developing policy recommendations.

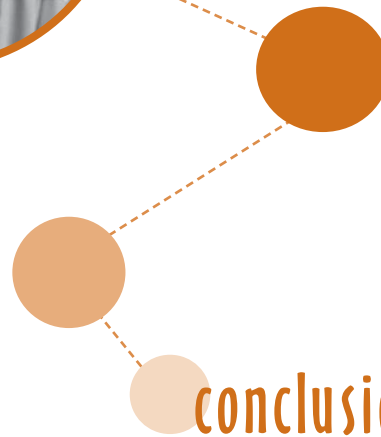
Q: How can I make sure the report is used to make a difference?

A: It is important to form an advisory committee early in the process to help plan and carry out dissemination, outreach, publicity, and advocacy. It is helpful to coordinate with volunteer groups devoted to women and girls such as the League of Women Voters, the American Association of University Women, the National Association of Women Business Owners, and the Junior League. Other potential allies include chapters of the National Urban League, Acorn, Title IX coordinators, the Chamber of Commerce, the Athena Foundation, and women's studies, sociology, or similar departments at local colleges and universities. Publicity for the report can also include case studies that illustrate, in human terms, some of the issues raised in the report.

In addition to making a report of your research available in print, it can be helpful to produce shorter fact sheets, and to make the data available on a website. Information on the web can be updated periodically as new data become available. As more and more county-level reports on the status of women are produced, some state level organizations may wish to develop web-based clearinghouses for reports produced within a region. For example, in the state of Michigan, the Michigan Women's Commission (www.michigan.gov/mdcr) plans to compile county-level reports on their website.

A set of allies can use the data in the report to build a legislative or advocacy agenda that emphasizes top needs of women and girls in the area. For example, some groups may advocate for a county or statewide commission on women if one is not already in place. Some may choose to create a school curriculum that encourages girls to pursue nontraditional occupations. Others may pursue an initiative to increase the number of women candidates for political office. Future reports can be used to track progress toward women's equality in your region.





conclusion

Congratulations on undertaking this exciting project! Collecting and disseminating data on women's status at the county level is an important way to inform the public about women's status, to build networks and coalitions, and to effect specific policy outcomes. We hope that you find this tool useful and that you enjoy the process of assessing the status of women in your county. Best of luck!

Order IWPR reports from *The Status of Women in the States* 2004 series

About *The Status of Women in the States* Project

This publication is one in a series of *Status of Women in the States* reports by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR). Over the past ten years, *The Status of Women in the States* has become a leading source of analysis of women's status across the country. Between 1996 and 2004, IWPR has produced individual reports on women's status in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, as well as biennially updated reports on national trends across the states.

The Status of Women in the States project is designed to inform citizens about the progress of women in their state relative to women in other states, to men, and to the nation as a whole. The reports have three main goals: 1) to analyze and disseminate information about women's progress in achieving rights and opportunities; 2) to identify and measure the remaining barriers to equality; and 3) to provide baseline measures and a continuing monitor of women's progress throughout the country.

The Status of Women in the States reports have been used throughout the country to highlight remaining obstacles facing women in the United States and to encourage policy changes designed to improve women's status. Data on the status of women give citizens the information they need to address the key issues facing women and their families.

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